CHAPTER - III

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Indian society was in a state of transition. The moot question of the day was whether the modernization of the society was to take place along western line or along the line of Rammohun Roy, who proposed a synthesis between the East and the west. In this transitional period Derozio wanted to spread western, particularly English ideas. This was his primary intellectual commitment.

1. Sources of Derozio's Socio-Religious Concepts: Derozio and Western Philosophers:

Derozio was largely inspired by Francis Bacon's (1561-1626) philosophy. Bacon stood for what was a revolt against scholasticism. He advocated sound and solid learning, particularly scientific learning, in place of matters and studies of far inferior importance. He held that thirst after knowledge was the thrust to human progress. He eulogised the role of natural science in the advancement of knowledge and craved after power over nature. His works, especially 'Advancement of Learning', are worthy to be called classical. His Novum Organum (1620) embodied his scientific views, and New Atlantis (1624) set forth scientific utopia. He

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revolted against submission to tradition which had become static and stale. He shared this attitude with Descartes, though the latter's zeal was philosophic while that of Bacon was scientific. Further, like Descartes, Bacon recommended a fresh start for knowledge - beginning with doubt and not with certainties. He maintained doubt to be the first step on the way to truth.\(^1\)\(^a\) Again, he was against the method of speculation used by the schoolmen. He wanted to create a new mansion of natural sciences, based on observation and experiment. In his *Novum Organum* he did not accept the methods of classical scientists who fitted particular facts into the general proposition and thus greatly relied on theorizing. He advocated the "inductive method", i.e. the collection of facts first from which general propositions could then be formulated.\(^1\)\(^b\) Finally, Bacon's time marked a transitional period when minds of men were being disentangled from the church. Although in Bacon's religious views there was the sovereignty of faith, particularly the acceptance of revelation and submission to God's will, in his scientific views there was a reign of reason.\(^1\)\(^c\) In order to remove

\(^1\)\(^a\) Barlingay, S.S. & Kulkarni, Padma B., loc. cit., p. 22.
\(^1\)\(^b\) Barlingay, S.S. et al. pp. 23 & 25.
\(^1\)\(^c\) Barlingay, S.S. et al., pp. 23 & 28.
the impediments in the way of acquiring knowledge Bacon prescribed to a scientist a whole course of purging the mind of different prejudices which he called "idols".\textsuperscript{1d} He had given a list of qualifications necessary for a scientist while he described his own capacities.\textsuperscript{1e} Here he virtually took a critical view of the theological assertion that faith and the church were the only source of truth. He thus established a new criterion of truth, divested of theological assertions.

Derozio shared the Baconian idea of fresh knowledge as the driving force of human progress. In an address to the students he wrote: "As your knowledge increases, moral principles will be fortified and rectitude of conduct

\textsuperscript{1d} Barlingay, S.S. et al. p. 24.

\textsuperscript{1e} Bacon held:

'I was fitted for nothing so well as the study of truth, a mind nimble and versatile enough to catch the resemblances of things and at the same time steady enough to fix and distinguish their subtler differences; as being gifted by nature with desire to seek, patience to doubt, fondness to meditate, slowness to assert, readiness to reconsider, carefulness to dispose and set in order and as being a man that neither affects what is new nor admires what is old and hates every kind of imposture.'

will ensure happiness."² As it is reflected in his Sonnet "To My Pupils" (1829)²a, he fondly wished that the new learning was to shed new perceptions upon their mind, emancipating them from the spell that bound their intellectual energies and powers.³ It may appear from a "Sonnet" (1830)⁴ to the students that he felt a strong hope that the students he trained would help the resuscitation of India's greatness in future by removing the gloom caused by the tyranny of the priests.⁵ He composed a "Sonnet on the


2a. The Sonnet, "To My Pupils" was printed in the Kaleidoscope No. I, 1829 under the pen name "D", The Kaleidoscope No. 1, 1829, reprinted in Chattopadhyay, Gautam, (ed), Bengal : Early Nineteen Century (Selected Documents), p. 5. But the Sonnet was printed by most writers under the caption, "Sonnet to the Pupils of Hindu College".


4. Derozio, H.L.V. "Sonnet" (March 8, 1830), The Poetical Works of Henry Louis Vivian Derozio (Mr. Owen Aratoon's edition), p. 64. The Sonnet was dedicated to those students of the Hindu College who originated and carried into effect the proposal for procuring a portrait of David Hare. The Sonnet in the Appendix - I. p. 717.

5. David Kopf observes: "As is reflected in the ... Sonnet, he felt a deterministic optimism that the students he trained would help direct India's course towards the secular millennium"— Kopf, David, British Orientalism And Bengal Renaissance, The Dynamics Of Indian Modernization, 1773-1835, p. 256.
Philosophy of Bacon". In the Sonnet he welcomed Bacon's scientific and secular ideal of truth. He thus sought to emancipate the mind of his pupils from medieval scholastic and religious tradition. He believed that herein lay the spring of India's progress.

Thomas Paine's (1757-1809) 'Age of Reason' (1807) was popular among Derozio's students and disciples. The book brought about a virtual revolution in the field of religious thought in France and England. It sought to discredit authority and tradition outright and raised a storm of disapproval in both the places. It openly challenged the validity of accepted social systems and alarmed the prejudices of orthodox men in the country. It questioned the validity of archaic religious ideas and outworn social institutions. It sought to justify everything in terms of reason. Paine's rational spirit, it is likely, inspired a number of Derozio's students.

One may contend that Derozio was an atheist. There might be some arguments in favour of the contention. Once in 1826 Derozio remarked: "I am cut out for anything but

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the pulpit". In the will for the disposal of family and individual property he wrote on December 23, 1831, just three days before his death, there was no declaration of solemn oath in the name of God. The death-bed scene closed with the recitation of the second book of Campbell's *Pleasures of Hope* but not with the reading out of the texts from the Bible. The story of the death-bed recantation of his infidelity remains challenged.

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safely said that the poem, "A Dramatic Sketch" reflects Derozio's belief in God. 12a

But what Derozio sought to impress upon the mind of his pupils was David Hume's (1711-1776) scepticism. It may be conjectured that Derozio was imbued with David Hume's scepticism as interpreted by his teacher, David Drummond, who was suspected to be a sceptic and follower of the Scottish philosopher. However, in his letter to H.H. Wilson dated April 26, 1831, he denied the charge of atheism brought against him and defended scepticism in a somewhat diplomatic manner. He wrote that he had never denied the existence of God in the hearing of any human being. But he found it nothing wrong to open discussion on such a subject. He was neither afraid nor ashamed to confess having stated the doubts of philosophers upon the God-head, because he had also stated the solution of these doubts. He held that if it was forbidden anywhere to argue upon such a question it must be equally wrong to adduce an argument upon either side.

12a. Derozio, H.L.V. "A Dramatic Sketch", The Poetical Works Of Henry Louis Vivian Derozio, Vol. I, ed. by Shah, B.B., pp. 152-160; Also Appendix- I, pp. 729-731. As it is reflected in the poem, "A Dramatic Sketch", the poet in a romantic mood dreams solitude and bliss in a realm far away from this world, which is as if Godly or divine. It is noteworthy that this poetic vision of unearthly bliss out of romantic spirit, though welcomed by the "Devotee", is regarded by the "Follower" as a wild fancy, deadening one's fellow-feeling and love of this practical world.
He did not think it consistent with an enlightened notion of truth to wed themselves to only one view of so important a subject, resolving to close their eyes and ears against the impressions that opposed themselves to it.  

He described his students as "youths peculiarly circumstanced". He did not describe the circumstances, but he probably wanted to argue that his teachings were calculated to improve the mental condition of his students. He wanted to remove what he referred to as their "contented ignorance." He thought that he would have made them "pert and ignorant dogmatists" by permitting them to know what would be said upon only one side of such a grave question.

"Doubt and uncertainty", he added, "besiege us too closely to admit the boldness of dogmatism to enter an enquiring mind". He recited Francis Bacon's famous saying - "If a man will begin with certainties, he shall end in doubt".

He, therefore, thought it his duty to acquaint several of the college students with the substance of Hume's celebrated dialogue between Cleanthes and Philo in which the most

subtle and refined arguments against theism are adduced but he also furnished them with Dr. [Thomas] Reid's (1710-1796) and Dugald Stewart's (1753-1796) more acute replies to Hume. He thus taught his students to debate and doubt the existence of Godhead in an artful manner, thereby unhinging their mind from the traditional moorings of the day.

Derozio's objections to the philosophy of Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) are noteworthy. In the present state of our knowledge we cannot definitely say what were points of Derozio's contention. Dr. Mill, the distinguished Sanskrit Scholar, and one of the most learned and able Principals of the old Bishop's (Middleton) College, declared before a large public assembly "that the objections, which Derozio published to the philosophy of Kant, were perfectly original, and displayed powers of reasoning and observation which would not disgrace even gifted philosophers." Kant was a rationalist and an idealist. Nevertheless, in his "critique of practical Reason" (1788), Kant argued that freedom of the will, immortality, and the existence of God must be assumed as "postulates of pure practical reason" in order to provide

16. Ibid, p. 84.
a foundation for moral law and moral action.\textsuperscript{18} Kant speaks of the universality of moral principles.\textsuperscript{19} According to Kant, a will, which acts for the sake of duty, is a good will.\textsuperscript{20} It must not be determined by interests. It must be autonomous.\textsuperscript{21} We cannot regard ourselves as making universal laws, as morally autonomous, save under the idea of freedom.\textsuperscript{22} Kant speaks of the "summon bonum" i.e. perfect good.\textsuperscript{23} The first element of perfect good must be realized in the form of an indefinite, unending progress towards the ideals. But this endless progress is possible only on the supposition of the unending duration of the existence and personality of the same rational being which is called the immortality of the soul.\textsuperscript{24} Kant also thinks that we cannot really conceive of the possibility of the perfect good being realized except on the supposition that there exists a God.\textsuperscript{25} Kant's concept of ethics was largely free from formal theology.\textsuperscript{26} He held that "moral law leads to religion, that is to

\textsuperscript{18} Frederick Copleston, S.J. "Morality and Religion" (Chapter xiv, pp. 101-140), \textit{A History Of Philosophy, Vol. 6} (Modern Philosophy), \textit{Part II}, (Kant), p. 120. Also Gottchalk, Louis and Lach, Donald, loc. cit., p. 606.

\textsuperscript{19} Frederick Copleston, S.J., \textit{A History of Philosophy, Vol. 6, Part II}, p. 104.

\textsuperscript{20} Ibid, p. 108.

\textsuperscript{21} Ibid, p. 121.

\textsuperscript{22} Ibid, p. 125.

\textsuperscript{23} Ibid, p. 128.

\textsuperscript{24} Ibid, p. 130.

\textsuperscript{25} Ibid, p. 132.

\textsuperscript{26} Ibid, p. 135.
the recognition of all duties as divine".\footnote{Ibid.} This point of view reappears in his "Religion Within The Bounds Of Pure Reason" (1793).\footnote{Ibid, pp. 135-136.} It is likely that Derozio did not subscribe to Kant's concept of moral law which lay at the basis of faith in God or immortality of soul, because he chiefly concerned himself with David Hume's scepticism.\footnote{R.K. Dasgupta makes an interesting observation: "Actually Derozio's master was the philosopher about whom Kant said that he had awakened him from his dogmatic slumbers. Kant said this after reading a work called "Inquiry Into Human Understanding" published in 1788 (\?). Dasgupta, R.K. "Henry Louis Vivian Derozio, Journal of History, Jadavpur University, Vol. V, p.7.} Derozio translated the moral philosophy of M. Pierre Louis Moreau, De Maupertuis, a French thinker, from French into English. The translation was printed posthumously. The translated work on Moral Philosophy consists of three parts:

1) What is happiness and what is misery?

ii) In ordinary life, the sum of evil exceeds that of good.

iii) Reflections on the nature of pleasure and pains.

As it appears from the translated portions, Maupertuis closely in Benthamite style identified pleasure with happiness.
and pain with misery. He talked of the choice of the greatest good and the rejection of the greatest evil, the bad use of reason as the root of evils in life, and of the noble pleasures as the greatest.

Yet Maupertuis, like Bentham, failed to uphold the idea of the greatest good of the greatest number. Maupertuis was concerned with "the infinite variety of human conduct [owing] to the different ways in which ... calculations are made." "Would not a happier life be the reward of his (man's) reflections and his exertions" - his query notwithstanding, he appeared at times not ready to make a discrimination between one pleasure and another. As he wrote: "Let us not then be alarmed about comparing the pleasures of sense with the most intellectual pleasures; let us not create an illusory belief that there may be some pleasures of a less noble nature than others". He was thus concerned with calculations of good and evil or of pleasure and pain varying from one individual to another in proportion to the changes in the working of one's mind.

The reason for Derozio's inclination to Maupertuis's moral philosophy is not far to seek. Derozio was imbued with

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34. Ibid, p. 231.
the individualist philosophy of the West. As such he concerned himself with the individual's pleasures and pain as inculcated by Maupertuis.

Derozio did not seem to share the epicurean note of Maupertuis's philosophy. He shared the idealistic faith of the perfectability of man.

It may appear from a Sonnet that Derozio had faith in the inherent capacity of man to vanquish the forces of evil and to determine the course of improvement. In him the idea of the promotion of good was bound with such individual capacity. He thus shared the eighteenth century prophetic concept of man's perfectability, which was spiritually akin to Condorset's unswerving faith in the universal rhythm of historical progress.

In the 'Sonnet' the concept of perfectability was exemplified in the gauntlet against the notion of fate which was a dominant trend among the Hindus, Derozio trusted to the capacity of man to defeat the tyrant fate.

It is noteworthy that he exhorted the students to cultivate sound moral principles. In an address to the students (1829) he wrote:


My advice to you is that you go forth into the world strong in wisdom and in worth, scatter the seeds of love among mankind, seek the peace of your fellow creatures, for in their peace you will have peace yourselves.

As a poet 38 he was greatly inspired by the English romantic poets - Thomas Moore (1799-1852), L.E. Landon (1802-1838), Lord Byron (1798-1824), William Wordsworth (1770-1850), John Keats (1795-1821), P.B. Shelly (1792-1822), and Sir Walter Scott (1791-1832). Perhaps nineteenth century romanticism can best be defined by comparison with the ideals of Enlightenment and Industrial Revolution, by whose rationalism and materialism the "romanticists" were repelled. As a general rule, the romantics, instead of emphasizing reason and empiricism, trusted the emotions and inner personality.

37. The Calcutta Literary Gazette, January 3, 1835; Also Sengupta, Pallab, op. cit., p. 104.

to mould man's mind and behaviour. 39 Romanticism was a kind of passionate protest against social convention and social morality. 40

Derozio shared the English romantic spirit of literary and social protest against convention. He composed poems on love and romance in imitation of Thomas Moore, L.E. Landon, Lord Byron, and Sir Walter Scott, and on nature after John Keats and P.B. Shelly. He subscribed to the romantic ideal of freedom of individual feeling, emotion and passion. 41 He imbibed Wordsworth's, Shelly's and Keats's love of nature. He harped upon its wonderful power and turned to it as a source of inspiration. 42 Like Shelly, he described its mystic influence on man. Like Wordsworth, he traced the affinity between man and nature. 43

40. Bertrand Russell thus evaluates the nature and consequences of the 'Romantic' movement:
   "The romantic movement, in its essence, aimed at liberating human personality from the fetters of social convention and social morality ... The romantic movement brought the revolt into the sphere of morals. By encouraging a new lawless Ego, it made social co-operation impossible, and it left its disciples with the alternatives of anarchy and despotism."
   - Russell, Bertrand, History Of Western Philosophy, pp. 658-659.
41. Derozio, H.L.V., "Poetry" (February, 1827), Poems, pp. 18-19; Also Appendix, I. p. 705.
Derozio typified the romantic ideal of freedom in his passionate protest against certain Hindu customs and tradition in some of his poems like "The Fakeer Of Jungheera" (1828) and "Eclipse." In his poem named "Tasso" he made a passionate plea that want of liberty was like the confinement of a bird in a cage. He instilled the passionate ideal of liberty into the mind of his students. Alexander Duff noted that the English romantic poets were sometimes quoted by the students in the Academic Association, a debating club set up in 1828 under his auspices.

As a romantic poet he, however, met with severe criticism. In the opinion of some critics "The Fakeer Of Junghereera" is altogether upon the strained and extravagant model of Lord Byron's poetic romances of love and murder. According to some writers, "Derozio gave up his soul to the writings of Moore, Byron, and L.E.L." His style "has been termed the echo of Byron, Moore and L.E. Landon," and "exaggerated idealism and pictures of passion."

44. For details section III of this chapter. pp. 165-166.
45. Derozio, H.L.V. "Tasso", Poems, pp. 94-95; Also Appendix, I. p. 716.
46. Duff, Alexander, India And India Missions, pp. 614-615; Also Ghose, Benoy, Bidrohi Derozio (Bengali), p. 59.
Derozio was not solely a romantic poet, nor all passions and emotions as his critics would have us believe. In some of his poems he seemed to concern himself with the material world by which the English romantics were repelled. His observations on 'The Modern British Poets' (1830) read something like an answer to his critics. Here he was somewhat critical of romanticism, though he had respect for Byron, Shelley and Wordsworth. He gave a clarion call to the poets to rise above false sentiments, misdirected enthusiasm and base passions, which were calculated to subvert noble elements of human nature and to make human beings indifferent to reality. He held: "Let the poet abandon war, misanthropy, romance and false feelings; let his enthusiasm be on that side which espouses man's best interest; let it be his object to improve ... and to promote the advancement of society." He added that poetry "should be made ... an instrument for elevating and improving man's moral and intellectual nature." He regretted that few poets "have advocated that independence of thought and action which elevates a man to the condition he should enjoy, and for which he was doubtless (ly) designed by nature."

53. Ibid, pp. 223-224.
54. Ibid, p. 224.
55. Ibid, p. 223.
56. Ibid.
Derozio wrote a poem named "Independence" posthumously printed. Here he stood for individual freedom from fear of tyranny.57

Derozio voiced the humanitarian ideal of the West. He was to some extent inspired by Thomas Campbell (1774-1843) in this respect. He wrote a poem entitled "Freedom To The Slave" (1827) after the famous saying of Campbell - "And as the slave departs the man returns."58 In the poem he expressed the feeling that slavery was degrading and inconsistent with the status of a man - his free movement, thought and action. He sang the glory of the struggle for freedom from the fetters of slavery and tyranny.

It is interesting that Derozio wrote the poem on slavery at about the time when the anti-slavery movement was quite strong in England. It started in the late twenties of 19th century England. George Thompson, the later political "guru" of young Bengal, played an important part in the movement. The movement bore fruit. An Act prohibiting slavery was passed in 1833, a year after the passing of the Reform Bill.

In India slavery was persistent in its worst form. In 1785 Sir William Jones, while referring to a Court-decision on the slave trade in Calcutta, unfolded the story of cruel torture and oppression of the slaves. He pointed out that it was caused by the extreme penury of the poorer Indians who were forced to sell their sons and daughters under the compelling situation, or under economic hardship during the natural calamities like famine. He added that children were abducted from remote villages of Bengal and carried to the slave-market of Calcutta. Every year about a hundred boys and girls used to be brought from Assam and Cooch Behar to Bengal for the purpose of slave trade (during the reign of Maharaja Harendra Narayan in Cooch Behar, who died in 1839). In 1793 the Court of Directors issued orders, prohibiting the export of slaves to places outside Bengal. However, the traffic in slaves persisted in Bengal.


A very brief analysis of the slave system in Cooch Behar, a tributary state of the English, has been made in the article, Ibid, pp. 204-206.

61. Ghose, Benoy, loc. cit., p. 39. It may be noted in this connection that during the reign of Maharaja Harendra Narayan children were sometimes sent from Cooch Behar to Burma through Assam for slave trade - Chattopadhyay, Gautam (ed.), loc. cit., p. 205.
about the middle of the 19th century. 62 The Periodicals (English and Bengali) like the Calcutta Gazette and the Samachar Durpan of the second, third and fourth decades of the 19th century occasionally supplied information regarding the slaves of Calcutta - the oppression of the slaves by their new masters, the fleeing away of the servants and slaves out of the fear of torture, the advertisement about the purchase and sale of slaves like commodities, the sale of sons and daughters by the hapless and poor parents at a very nominal price, even the giving away of children by some natives out of orthodox religious belief. 63

Speaking of slavery in the tributary state like Cooch Behar, a writer contends that the 'Tantric' rituals, which necessitated the sacrifice of human life, contributed to the rise of slavery in the region. Among other causes of slavery mentioned by him was the inability of a ryot to pay off debt to a Zamindar. 64 In 1843 the British Government passed an Act rendering the system of slavery illegal in India. In Cooch Behar it, however, went on till 1864.

64. Chattopadhyay, Gautam (ed.), op. cit., pp. 204-205.
In that year it was formally abolished by the promulgation of a Regulation (in the Bengali language) primarily through the exertions of Col. Hotton, the Commissioner of the State.  

In the context of India Derozio's poem on slavery was pregnant with a radical implication. His poem reflected sympathy for the tortured and oppressed slaves. It had the ringing note of a fervent appeal for struggle for the freedom of the slaves.

Derozio had, however, no programme of action to follow up his clarion call for the abolition of slavery. But that need not detract from the intrinsic merit of a humanitarian call given by a young Eurasian poet.

Derozio was largely moved by the humanitarian consideration in voicing sympathy for the distress of the fair sex. In a poem named "The Orphan Girl" he voiced the concern over the uncertain fate of an orphan girl. He also devoted his pen to the sad state of Hindu females in some of his poems. In his poem, "On The Abolition Of Sattee", he viewed the depressed condition of Hindu women with indignation. He also contended that the condition of Hindu women

was inferior to that of "Daughters of Europe". As it is reflected in the poem, he was inspired by broad humanitarian, liberal and rational considerations.

Derozio learnt to love Robert Burns (1757-1796) at the instance of his teacher, David Drummond, who out of deep respect for the poet composed a poem named "In Memory Of Robert Burns." Robert Burns wrote numerous poems in the Scottish dialect on the life of Scottish peasants, and the common men and women. He was also a great lyricist. Derozio, in common with Wordsworth or Burns, might be said to have felt and expressed the affinity and sympathy between man and nature. What greatly impressed Derozio was Burns's humanitarian ideal of universal brotherhood. Just a few days before his death, he in a notice on the examination of the pupils of Dharmatollah Academy appreciated the free academic atmosphere of the Institution by quoting with glee from Burns's couplet on universal brotherhood of man. He observed:

At the Dhurrumtollah Academy it is quite delightful to witness the exertions of Hindu and Christian youths, striving together for academic honours; this will do much towards softening asperities, which always arise in hostile sects, and when the Hindu and the Christian have learned from mutual intercourse how much there is to be admired in the human character, without reference to differences of opinion in religious matters, shall we be brought nearer than we now are to that happy condition when

"Man to man the world o'er,
Shall brothers be and a' that". 70

In this plea for Burns's deal of universal brotherhood he disregarded the prejudice of Christian parents against getting their children educated with Indian youths. It is, however, noteworthy that he instilled the ideal into the mind of his students which proved inspiring to them in revolting against the institution of caste. Krishna Mohun Banerjea, a disciple of Derozio, to cite for example, was greatly inspired by Burns's ideal of universal brotherhood

70. The East Indian, Saturday, December 17 (1831) cited in the India Gazette, December 21, 1831.
in unfurling the banner of revolt against caste.71

ii) Derozio And Hindu Customs And Practices:

Derozio grew critical of Hindu religious customs and practices including Hindu prejudices and superstitions. He attacked the institution of priesthood. In "The Fakeer Of Jungheera" he sought to expose the unholy deeds of holy characters and hollowness of saintly men and priests of India.72 He believed that superstitions were priestly impositions. In his poem named "Eclipse" he contended that the Brahmins knew the real cause of eclipse but the people in general were plunged into the superstitious notion of it.73 In a "Sonnet To The Pupils Of The Hindu College" (1830) he, as noted before, attributed the degeneration of India primarily to the priestly tyranny. In his ode "On The Abolition Of Sattee" he condemned the tyranny of priests as being responsible for prolongation of the degradation of Hindu females.74

71. "The Young "liberals" ... formed debating societies of their own, and to those (Alexander) Duff would go and take part in their discussion ... Duff quotes with glee a conversation on the subject of caste with a young Brahmin, who suddenly broke into quotation from Robert Burns."

The young Brahmin referred to was Krishna Mohun Banerjea, Paton, William, Alexander Duff, pp. 81-82. For Burns's influence on Krishna Mohun Banerjea, see Smith, George, Life of Alexander Duff, p. 92.


73. Derozio, H.L.V. "Eclipse, Poems", pp. 97-98, Also Appendix, I.

He entered into a fervent protest against the wretched condition of Hindu females and stood for female emancipation. He voiced the frustration to which Indian women were doomed at that time in the poem, "Song Of The Indian Girl". In "The Fakeer Of Jungheera" he viewed Sati as an inhuman act. In a note on the poem he pointed out that Sati was not a voluntary act as was generally supposed at that time. The victim of Sati, in his opinion, had little notion of heaven and preferred immediate death to protracted widowhood because of the miserable existence of a widow in the world. Sati was not "an act of unparalleled magnanimity and devotion" but "a melancholy reflection upon the tyranny of superstition and priest-craft". While paying tribute to Bentick for the promulgation of the anti-Sati Regulation in his ode "On The Abolition Of Sattee"; he held that women were the victims of the tyranny of priestcraft and superstition and doomed to misery, seclusion, ignorance, early marriage, Sati and widowhood. He looked forward to female emancipation in future.

75. Derozio, H.L.V., "Song Of The Indian Girl" (January, 1827), Poems, p. 50, Also Appendix, I. p. 720.

76. Derozio, H.L.V. "The Fakeer Of Jungheera", Canto I. X
Bardley-Birt, F.B. op. cit., pp. 147-148, Also Appendix, I.


78. Derozio, H.L.V. "On The Abolition Of Sattee", Appendix, I.
pp. 711-714.
He attacked idolatry. In *The East Indian* of December, 1831 he criticised the orthodox Hindus, particularly their endeavour "to defend the cause of idolatry."\(^7^9\)

He, however, grew critical of all Hindu religious observances. In a review of the annual function of the Dharma-matollah Academy, a few days before his death, he wrote:

> When a Hindoo casts off all appearances of Hindoo religious observance, the majority of his countrymen naturally consider that person as an outcast. He is no longer [a] Hindoo. What then is he? [He replies] - a lover of Truth.\(^8^0\)

Here Derozio upheld what might be called the secular ideal of truth. It would have been fair on the part of Derozio as a free thinker had he not launched sweeping attack upon Hindu religious practices. It is likely that Derozio, who was a Eurasian and brought up in Western intellectual and social tradition, had little knowledge of the religious observances of the Hindus. One may contend that he was overzealous in the matter of social reform and change of the Hindu society. But it would be erroneous to think that Derozio attacked the whole system of Hinduism. Hinduism is not merely a set of religious observances or practices. It enshrines a system of philosophy, laws, ethics and morality.

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However, Derozio was highly critical of Rammohun Roy and his followers for their inconsistent blending of liberalism with orthodoxy. He pointed out that though Rammohun was a liberal in his religious profession, he was as good as an orthodox Hindu. Rammohun, he wrote, "appealed to the Vedas, the Koran, and the Bible, holding them all probably in equal estimation, extracting the good from each and rejecting from all whatever he considers apocryphal." But in practice Rammohun conformed to Brahmanical orthodoxy. Derozio cited that when a person would salute Rammohun as a Brahmin, the latter would pronounce Brahmanical benediction upon such occasion. He always lived like a Hindu, drinking a little wine occasionally in cold weather. He "has sat at table with Europeans, but never eaten anything with them." In these citations Derozio tried to explain the contradiction of Rammohun between thought and action.

Derozio also referred to the contradiction of the Brahma Sabha in glowering terms. "The Brhma Sabha" he wrote, "was not a Brahmanical Juggle" and "established by Rammohun Roy upon the purest principles of worship to God and love

81. The India Gazette, October 3, 1831; Also Moitra, Suresh Chandra "Hindu College: Derozio: Adhunikata", De, Rama Prasad (ed) Derozio (Bengali), pp. 83-84; Also Salahuddin Ahmed, A F. Social Ideas And Social Change In Bengal (1st edn.), p. 43.

82. The India Gazette, October 5, 1831.

83. Ibid.
to man". But the Directors of the Sabha, by bestowing gift upon the Brahmins to the exclusion of others, he added made an unreasonable distinction between one man and another, and "to give the Brahmins up on one account and to take them back on another is quite super derogatory" and "the same humbug under another name." 85

Of Rammohun's followers, Derozio wrote: "His followers, at least some of them, are not very consistent. Sheltering themselves under the shadow of his name, they indulge to [in ?] licentiousness in everything forbidden in the Sthras, as meat and drink, while at the same time, they see the Brahmins, profess to disbelieve [in] Hinduism, and never neglect to have Poojahs at home." 86 Further, "The Brahmins are treated by his followers with as much respect as they are by the most orthodox". 87

He charged Prosunno Coomar Tagore, a notable disciple of Rammohun Roy, for his attack on idolatry in the Reformer (1831) and at the same time celebrating idolatrous worship in his house. 88 In reply to the charge a friend of Prosunno Coomar Tagore wrote: "He has celebrated an idolatrous poojah in his family not because he approves of it but because he cannot avoid doing it. The property he inherits

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84. The East Indian, reprinted in The India Gazette, September 30, 1831.
85. Ibid.
86. The East Indian, October 19, 1831, reprinted in the India Gazette, October 5, 1831.
87. Ibid.
88. The India Gazette, October 19, 1831.
from his ancestor is left to him on condition of celebrating
the Poojah every year." 89 To this a rejoinder was given in
the East Indian, denying the authenticity of such a state-
ment. 90 Derozio described Rammohun or his disciples as
"half-liberals". 91

iii) **Derozio's Socio-religious Concepts And Their Dissimination**

Derozio adopted different methods with a view to disse-
minating his ideas. He wanted to develop the power of inde-
pendent thought of his pupils through his teachings in the
class-rooms. He drew them out to give free and full expression
to their opinions on topics naturally arising from the
course of their work in the class rooms. 92 "The class of
Derozio in the Hindu College", as Lal Behari De wrote, "was
not dull and monotonous. It was to compare small things with great
[ones] like the Academies of Plato, or the Lycum of Aristotle.
There was free interchange of thought between the professor
and the pupils; and the young men were not so much crammed
with information as taught to think and judge." 93

89. Ibia.
90. *The India Gazette*, November 1, 1831.
91. *The India Gazette*, October 5, 1831.
93. Dr. Lal Behari, *Recollections Of Alexander Duff And Of
   The Mission College He Founded*, p. 29.
As the class-room could not be turned into an arena of discussion on all topics, the students were encouraged to see him outside it. Derozio conducted a Conversazione or a discussion course in the Hindu College without the knowledge of the Managers. The meetings were held almost daily before and after school hours. Thomas Edwards writes: "He fostered their taste in literature, taught the evil effects of idolatry and superstition, and so far formed their moral conceptions and feelings as to make them completely above the antiquated ideas and aspirations of the age." 94

However, the advanced students of the Hindu College frequently sought his company during the tiffin hours, and after the school hours, and in his house. He encouraged everyone to speak out freely, and this led to free exchange of thought on all subjects, particularly on social, religious, moral and metaphysical subjects. 95

In 1830 Derozio started giving a course of weekly evening lectures on metaphysics in the rooms of the Calcutta School Society's school at Pataldanga (subsequently known as Hare's School), which were attended by about one hundred and sixty young men. 96 In the present state of our knowledge we

95. Mitter, Pearcy, A Biographical Sketch of David Hare, p. 15
cannot say what was the viewpoint of Derozio's lectures. However, according to a writer, many of the youths, who attended the lectures, were delving deep into Bacon, Hume, Paine, Adam Smith (1723-1770), and Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832).  

Speaking of Derozio's teachings, what Kissory Chand Mitra observed is noteworthy. According to Kissory Chand, Derozio sought not to cram the mind but to inoculate it with large and liberal ideals, and thereby opened the eyes of his pupils' understanding. He taught them to think and throw off the fetters of antiquated bigotry. In truth, he imparted a freedom of thought and action which culminated in an open renunciation of idolatry and an aggressive heterodoxy.

Derozio sought to inculcate the spirit of free thinking through his poems and writings. In his poem entitled "On Abolition Of Sattee", he gave a clarion call for freedom from despotic customs, which set seal upon human thought and action. He believed that such freedom was essential to the fulfilment of the aspirations or desires of a man.

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In a note entitled "Acknowledgement Of Errors" in "Thoughts On Various Subjects", he urged the students to question the unquestionable authority of their superiors, particularly parents and instructors, which, in his opinion, was the source of all errors and prejudices. He wrote:

It has been frequently maintained, the parents and instructors should behave in such a manner towards children as to lead them to suppose that they are infallible ... This is fraught with mischief, and should be discouraged. It makes boys take opinions upon trust - the cause of all the prejudices and errors that exist.\(^\text{100}\)

Krishna Mohun Banerjea, a disciple of Derozio, carried this idea. He wrote in *The Enquirer* of 1831 that when a Hindu boy under the influence of liberalism would begin to hesitate believing all what was said by his parents and appeal to his reason they would begin to feel the triumph of their party.\(^\text{101}\)

Derozio was emphatic about the integrity between thought and action:


would men embody their thoughts, that is, act
according to their principles, we would see less
evils than at present exist.¹⁰²

This is a unique trait of Derozio's teachings. In India
the strength of tradition was very great. Tradition was the
bedrock of family. A student might study the philosophy of revo-
lution and rationalism in the class-room. But when he returned
to the bosom of his family, he had to abide by tradition. This
largely accounted for the contradiction of a number of intellec-
tuals of Derozio's time between thought and action.

As noted before, Derozio criticised the contradiction
of Rammohun and his followers between profession and practice
in his newspaper, The East Indian. The paper also attacked
Hindu orthodoxy.

The Academic Association was perhaps the most important
platform for disseminating Derozio's concepts. The name
'Academic" was possibly derived from the Greek word, 'Akademia'.
In 1828 Derozio started a debating club named the Academic
Association, which met at first either in his house or elsewhere
and was later transferred to Sreekissen Singh's Garden-house
located at Maniktollah.¹⁰³ Derozio was its President and

¹⁰². Derozio, H.L.V., "Human Action" (February 1, 1830) in
"Thoughts On Various Subjects", The Calcutta Literary
Gazette, January 3, 1835; cited in Sengupta, Pallab,
Loc. Cit., p. 103.

¹⁰³. The Modern Review, Vol. 55, 1934, p. 646, Shastri, Shivanath,
"Henry Louis Vivian Derozio", De, Rama Prasad (ed.) Derozio,
(Bengali), p. 5. According to Suresh Chandra Moitra, it
first met in the Hindu College, - Moitra, Suresh Chandra,
"Hindu College; Derozio : adhunikata", De, Rama Prasad (ed),
Loc. Cit., p. 58.
Uma Charan Bose its Secretary. It was perhaps the first debating club in Bengal. In it the students met in the evenings. Derozio was usually the Chairman of these meetings. They discussed and debated everything with utmost freedom.

As Alexander Duff recorded:

Opportunities were constantly presented for the advancement of counteracting statements and opinions on all subjects. When a topic for debate was selected, individuals were not appointed to open discussion on either side..... All were therefore left alike free in their choice; hence it not frequently happened that more than half a dozen followed in succession on the same side.104

The meetings of the Association were frequently attended by David Hare, and occasionally by Sir Edward Ryan, and Colonel Benson, Private Secretary to Lord William Bentick, Colonel Beatson, afterwards Adjutant-General and Dr. Mill, the Principal of the Bishop's College.105 The visitors felt it a rare privilege to respond to the invitation for participation in the deliberations. According to Duff, after all the members who were disposed had concluded, the strangers or visitors present were invited to deliver their sentiments on the leading

subject of the evening's discussion or any of the sentiments expressed by the different speakers in course of it. 106

In the Association the students read their papers, discussed, debated and wrangled. They thus acquired for themselves the facility of expressing their thoughts in words and the power of ready reply and argument. The topics were discussed and debated with reference to European authors. As Alexander Duff wrote: 'The sentiments delivered were fortified by oral quotations from English authors. If the subject was historical, [William] Robertson and [Edward] Gibbon (1737-1798) were appealed to; if political, Adam Smith and Jeremy Bentham; if scientific, [Sir Isaac] Newton (1642-1727), and Davy; if religious, [David] Hume and Thomas Paine; if metaphysical, [John] Locke (1632-1704), Thomas Reid, Dugald Stewart and Robert Brown. The whole was frequently interspersed and enlivened by passages cited from some of our most popular English poets, particularly Lord Byron and Sir Walter Scott.' And more than once were his ears greeted with the sound of Scotch rhymes from the poems of Robert Burns. 107

Subjects broached and discussed were free will, foreordination, fate, faith, the sacredness of truth, the high duty


of cultivating virtue, the meanness of vice, the nobility of patriotism, the attributes of God, and the arguments for and against the existence of deity as these have been set forth by Hume on one side and Reid, Dugald Stewart and Brown on the other, the hollowness of idolatry and the shams/priesthood.

The Academic Association proved inspiring to the educated youths of Bengal in establishing associations of the similar kind. By 1830 students not only of the Hindu College, but those belonging to Rammohun Roy's Anglo-Hindu School as well as the English schools run by the Calcutta/Society established as many as seven associations of the kind. Most of their meetings were held once a week, and some at long intervals, for discussing questions on literature and science, and sometimes on politics. The number of members varied from seventeen to fifty. At some of the societies written essays were produced upon which discussions followed. At one of them lectures on intellectual topics were delivered in rotation by the members. Although Derozio was President of the Academic Association, he was also connected with most of the other societies as a

108. The John Bull, December 11, 1830; Also Edwards, Thomas, op. cit., p. 32.
member, and took an active interest in their activities. 109

It is noteworthy that these societies became so much popular that some non-students started two or three vernacular societies. At these written essays on various subjects were produced. Verbal discussions then followed. 110 The societies helped in promoting free discussion and the spirit of free enquiry among the youths of Bengal.

iv. Derozio's Socio-religious Teachings: An Assessment:

Derozio was highly enthusiastic about the modernization of the Hindu society in the light of western ideas. He disliked Hindu superstitions and the mediaeval outlook of a number of his Hindu contemporaries. Unlike James Mill and some of the missionaries like Rev. William Ward, Derozio did not make any highly critical evaluation of Hinduism of which his knowledge was rather poor. But he did not anticipate what could be results of his teachings. As a contemporary wrote in May, 1829, a number of students of the first and second classes openly condemned the principles and practices


of Hindu religion. Hinduism was denounced as vile and corrupt and unworthy of the regard of rational beings. Reason was promoted to be the idol of fools. The sentiments of Hume had been widely diffused and warmly patronised.\textsuperscript{111} Lal Behari De, speaking of the proceedings of the Academic Association, observed:

"The young lions of the Academy" roared out week after week - "Down with Hinduism! Down with orthodoxy"!\textsuperscript{112} The Parthenon (1830), an English magazine, started in 1830 by the senior students of the Hindu College under the direction of Derozio, raised the similar slogan.\textsuperscript{113} Apparently conducted under Derozio's guidance\textsuperscript{114} the Enquirer, an English weekly\textsuperscript{115} and the Jnananveshan

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{111} Edwards, Thomas, op. cit., p. 68; Also Salahuddin Ahmed, A.F., loc. cit., p. 42.
\item \textsuperscript{112} De, Lal Behari, loc. cit., p. 30.
\item \textsuperscript{113} The Bengal Past And Present, Vol. 37, Part II, Serial No. 74 (April-June) 1929, p. 141.
\item \textsuperscript{114} Salahuddin Ahmed, A.F., op. cit., pp. 48-49.
\item \textsuperscript{115} Krishna Mohun Banerjea applied to the Government for a license to publish a weekly English paper from the printing press of Lall Bazar, Calcutta, on May 5, 1831, and obtained it on May 10, 1831 (Home Public Department, May 10, 1831, pp. 141-142). On 2nd October, 1832, he obtained the permission to shift the printing press from Lall Bazar to Bowbazar (Ibid, October 2, 1832). The last issue of the Paper was published on June 18, 1835 (Biswa, Krishna Kali, Unabimsa Satadhir Naba Jagoraner Aloke Reverened Krishna Mohun Bando padhyay [Bengali], p. 68.
\end{itemize}
a Bengali weekly, attacked Hindu religion. Derozio introduced his pupils to certain liberal ideas of the west and sought to stimulate a scientific or rational

116. Duckinarunjan Mukhopadhyay applied to the Government for a license to print and publish a Bengali weekly from Huru Chunder Tagore's house at Chorebagan on May 28, 1831 and obtained it on May 31, 1831 (Home Public Department, May 31, 1831, pp. 338-340). The Paper was started on June 18, 1831 (The Samachar Durpan, July 2, 1831 quoted in Bandopadhyay, B.N., Bangla Samayik Patra, (Bengali, 1818-1867), p. 57). The Paper was edited by Gourishankar Tarkabagish (The Sambad Timir Nashak quoted in The Samachar Durpan, January 21, 1832, cited in Bandopadhyay, B.N., Bangla Samayik Patra, p. 57). Madhob Chunder Mallick and Rusick Krishna Mullick approached the Government for a license to print and publish the paper from Chorebagan (No. 141) in Calcula in both English and Bengali. They were granted the permission on January 15, 1833 (pp. 123-124). They conducted the paper for about two years. It was sometime about 1835 or in 1835 that Ramgopal Ghose conducted the editorial management (The Hindoo Patriot, April 10, 1865, p. 118 cited in Bandopadhyay, B.N., Bangla Samayik Patra, p. 58). In July, 1837 it fell into the hands of Duckinarunjan Mukhopadhyay (Ramgopal Ghose's letter to Gobind Chunder Bysack dated July 9, 1837, cited in Bandopadhyay, B.N., Bangla Samayik Patra, p. 58). Taruk Chunder Bose was the Principal editor of the Jnananveshan. In September 1838 he severed connection with the paper (Ramgopal's letter to Gobind dated September 21, 1838, Ibid, p. 58). Later Ram Chunder Mitra and Horomohon Chatterjee conducted the paper (Ramgopal's letter to Gobind dated November 24, 1838, Cited in Bandopadhyay, B.N., Bangla Samayik Patra, pp. 58-59). The paper ceased to exist in November, 1840. According to the Calcutta Courier, it was given up for want of public support (The Calcutta Courier, November 24, 1846, reprinted in Bandopadhyay, B.N., Bangla Samayik Patra, p. 59). In 1850 the Jnanasancharini Patrika issued an advertisement for the publication of the Jnananveshan. The paper was, however, not re-established (The Sambad Purnochandrodhy, April 24, 1850 cited in Bandopadhyay, B.N., Bangla Samayik Patra, p. 59).

117. For full details see Chapter V, Section VI, pp. 269-273.
spirit of enquiry in their mind. The Young Bengali's first glimpse into the science and knowledge of the Western world, a writer contended, stirred up in their mind the spirit of free thinking and awakened in them a fervent sense of indignation at Hindu superstitions and religion.

Derozio, according to some writers, dissipated the bigotted ideas of his pupils with the rod of an enchanter and inflicted a death-blow on the impositions of the Brahmins. His lessons, according to Bholanath Chunder, swept away the scales from their mental eyes and removed the cataract from which generations had suffered. The spirited band of Youthful reformers, Bholanath added, took to over-indulgence after their emancipation from long-borne shackles. They raised an outcry against the Hindu religion.


122. Ibid, pp. 33-34.
Derozio was young and inexperienced. He was impractical too. He was uncompromising in his opposition to Hindu superstitions and customs. The students he taught were too young, mostly adolescent. They were fervently carried away by their adolescent enthusiasm in the cause of reformation. The result exceeded the bound of his teachings. Some of his students committed excesses and grew unreasonably aggressive towards their religion and fellow-countrymen for a time.

The over-emphasis upon the aggressive tone or temper of some adolescent youths has, however, obscured the fervent reforming impulse of Derozio's students. In the Academic Association the degraded state of the Hindus formed the topic of many debates. Their ignorance and superstitions were declared to be the cause of such a state. It was then resolved that nothing but a liberal education could enfranchise the mind of the people.\footnote{123}{Edwards, Thomas, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 68.} Again, in the Association the degradation of the female mind was viewed with indignation. It was carried unanimously that women should be taught.\footnote{124}{Edwards, Thomas, \textit{loc cit.}, p. 68.} The \textit{Parthenon} denounced Hindu superstitions and advocated female education.\footnote{125}{The \textit{Enquirer} of 1831 grew critical of Hindu customs and practices like idolatry,}
and caste etc. 126 There is perhaps some substance in Bholanath Chunder's contention that Derozio turned out "the Reformer Young Bengal", while David Lester Richardson turned out "the Literary Young Bengal". 127

Unfortunately, it was because of the tone of some pupils against Hindu religion that the College Committee scented the rise of atheism among the Hindu College students. In 1829 they passed an order to the following effect: "The students of the Hindu College are liable to lose all religious principles whatever. [and] it is resolved that Mr. D'Anslem (the Headmaster) be requested to communicate with the teachers and check as far as possible all disquisitions tending to unsettle the belief of the boys in the great principles of Natural Religion". 128 The Managers suppressed the Parthenon through the intervention of H.H. Wilson only after one issue of the Magazine had been published and circulated. 129 In February, 1830 they passed further order, strictly forbidding the teachers from having any communication with the pupils on religious subjects and especially on the religion of the Hindus. 130

126. For details Chapter V, Section VI. pp. 273-275.
129. The Bengal Spectator, September 1, 1842.
But it is not proper to think that atheism widely prevailed among the Hindu College students. According to the report of a contemporary English periodical, the Moderate Party consisted of two divisions — the friends and adherents of Rammohun and a number of students of the College. There might be little or no actual co-operation or intercourse between the two divisions. But both rejected idolatry on the ground of its opposition to reason, while they did not practically abstain from all observances.131

Again, to say that those students of the Hindu College or of Derozio, who decried Hinduism, were all atheists, was a hasty judgement of history. A threadbare and careful analysis is necessary before branding them as atheists.132

Among the charges brought against Derozio by the Manager of the Hindu College at an emergent meeting of April 23, 1831, and communicated to him by Wilson in a letter dated April 25, 1831, the first charge was that of atheism. In a letter dated April 26, 1831, Derozio gave a lengthy reply to Wilson. Derozio wrote that he was a free thinker, who taught his students to argue for and against

132. For details, Chapter V, Section V. pp. 265-266
the existence of God. "This is", he wrote, "the head and front of my offending". 133 "If the religious opinions of the students", he added, "have become unhinged in consequence of the course I have pursued, the fault is not mine. To produce convictions was not within my power, and if I am to be condemned for the 'Atheism' of some, let me receive credit for the 'Theism' of others". 134

Another charge against Derozio was that he taught his students to disrespect their parents. Derozio refuted the charge in no uncertain terms. He wrote: "I have always insisted upon respect and obedience to parents. I have indeed condemned that feigned respect which some children evince as being hypocritical and injurious to moral character, but I have always endeavoured to cherish the sentient feelings of the heart, and to direct them into proper channels". He furnished two examples to vindicate his contention on this point. He wrote that he dissuaded Duckinarunjan Mukhopadhyay from leaving his home on the plea of his father's insupportable treatment of him, which was not altogether without a base. But, to his regret, Duckinarunjan took his advice for a short time, and sooner left his house without consulting him. As another instance he

133. Edwards, Thomas, Henry Derozio, The Eurasian Poet, Teacher And Journalist, p. 84.
134. Ibid.
he wrote that he reproached Mohesh Chunder Singh for his having behaved rudely to his father and offended some of his other relatives. He told Mohesh that until he sought forgiveness from his father he would not speak to him. 136

A charge against Derozio was that he found nothing wrong in advocating the marriage of brothers and sisters. He dismissed the charge as a mere fabrication. He wrote that some fellows like Brindaban Ghosal, a poor Brahmin, were active in fabricating absurd and groundless stories about him and his family, and circulated them from house to house. As a result vague reports and unfounded remour went abroad concerning him. 137

The charge of immorality against Derozio was not tenable. The Government Gazette in its obituary on December 29, 1831 observed that his moral character was irreproachable; his devotion to spirit of what he deemed truth, was romantically uncompromising, and his intention good; his conduct as a son, a brother and friend and a member of society, which it was his dearest wish to elevate and improve, was such as to reflect credit on his memory and to make his death lamented by an extensive circle of friends and acquaintances. 137(a)

136. Ibid, pp. 85-86.
137. Ibid, pp. 87-88.
137(a) Cited in Edwards, Thomas, Henry Derozio, The Eurasian Poet, Teacher And Journalist, pp. 176-177.
The Weekly Examiner of 1840 edited by David Drummond remarked in its obituary that he left behind him a fragrance in the hearts of all who knew him.  

138 Hurro Mohun Chatterjee, a contemporary college assistant, wrote in his manuscript history of the college that such was the force of his instructions that the conduct of the students out of the college was most exemplary. He added that indeed, the college boy was a synonym for truth and that it was a general belief and saying among our countrymen that such a boy was incapable of falsehood.  

139 Derozio, according to Peary Chand Mitra, urged them to live and die for truth, and to cultivate all virtues, shunning vice in every shape.  

140 Radhanath Sikdar wrote that his moral teachings could not but be beneficial to India.  

141 One may contend that these statements were hasty generalizations about Derozio's moral teachings. These, however, tend to suggest that his moral teachings were high.

One great charge brought against Derozio by a number

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140. Mitra, Peary Chand, A Biographical Sketch Of Jagad Hare, p. 27.

writers was that he was a Christian collaborator.\textsuperscript{142} While a number of Hindu College students was raising slogans against Hindu religion and tradition, Alexander Duff along with Adam, Dealtry and Hill made an arrangement for delivering a series of lectures on Christianity in a house opposite to the College in order to convert the educated Hindus into it. The Managers of the Hindu College prohibited the students from attending Duff's lectures. The order of the Managers reads as follows: "The Managers of the Anglo-Indian College having heard that several of the students are in the habit of attending societies at which political and religious discussions are held, think it necessary to announce their strong disapprobation of the practice and to prohibit its continuance. Any student being present at such a society will incur their serious displeasure."\textsuperscript{143} The India Gazette passed a strong protest against the order. The paper regarded it as "an example of presumptuous, tyrannical and absurd intermeddling with the rights of private judgement on political and religious questions.\textsuperscript{144} It warned that a Christian Government and a

\textsuperscript{142} Biswas, Dilip Kumar, \textit{Rammohun Samiksha} (Bengali), p. 430. Chittabrata Palit observes: "Dilip Kumar Biswas in his recent survey of Rammohun has cast aspersions on Derozio as a Christian collaborator. He accepts verbatim what Edwards writes about Mahesh Ghosh and Krishnamohan Banerjea" - Palit, Chittabarta, "Derozio Controversies". \textit{The Journal of History} (Jadavpur University), Vol. V., p. 22.

\textsuperscript{143} Edwards, Thomas, op. cit., p. 70.

\textsuperscript{144} The \textit{India Gazette} quoted in Edwards, Thomas, \textit{Henry Derozio, The Eurasian Poet, Teacher And Journalist}, p. 71.
Christian community would not tolerate that the Managers of an Institution, supported in part by public money, should single out Christianity as the only religion against which they might direct their influence and authority.\(^{145}\) It desired that Christianity must, at least, have a hearing from those who were willing to hear.\(^{146}\) It appealed to Messrs. Hill and Duff to resume their lectures without delay.\(^{147}\) According to Thomas Edwards, the above comment of the *India Gazette* "has considerable resemblance to the style of Derozio and which, if not written by him, certainly speaks [of] his sentiments regarding the action of the management."\(^{148}\) It is not, however, definitely known, whether it came from Derozio's pen. But Derozio encouraged his students to attend Duff's lectures in defiance of the mandate of the Managers. When Wilson disapproved of such course of action on the part of Derozio in directly setting at defiance the mandate of the Managers, he declared that it was no business of his own to put a stop to free discussion and search for truth.\(^{149}\) "Whatever comes before you in the semblance of truth, that enquire into with all diligence, out of the high respect due to truth"—

\(^{145}\) Ibid, p. 72.
\(^{146}\) Ibid.
\(^{147}\) Ibid.
\(^{148}\) Ibid, p. 71.
\(^{149}\) Ibid, p. 124.
was his exhortation to the pupils. What Derozio desired was that his students would attend the lectures of Duff and his associates on Christianity with their rational and enquiring mind. Derozio may be said to have initiated rational enquiry into Christianity. He had no faith in the Christian revelation. He did not view Christianity as a communication from the divinity to the fallen man.

It is noteworthy that some students of Derozio like Krishna Mohun Banerjea, who attended the meeting on Christianity, grew critical of Duff's lectures. Krishna Mohun was not ready to accept the contention of Duff that the name of a Christian would be sufficient to cover the moral deformities of his heart and the worthlessness of his head, because men after truth or honest men would not count while selfish or immoral characters could be protected thereby. According to him, Duff's observation that not to be convinced of his position after hearing him was not error of understanding but obstinacy, or (to use Duff's words) 'a disease in the heart but not in the head' was tantamount to intolerance. He was not ready to accept Duff's sayings:

150. Ibid.
152. The Enquirer reprinted in The India Gazette, February 14, 1832.
153. The Enquirer reprinted in The India Gazette, March 10, 1832.
"We are bound to believe this; and if we doubt this, we must reject all history."\textsuperscript{154} He held that such a statement was dictatorial. He maintained that belief was not arbitrary but voluntary and a matter of free choice.\textsuperscript{155} It is noteworthy that he, while criticising Duff, also blamed "the Hindoos in consequence of their fanatical cursing and swearing against aportates from their religion."\textsuperscript{156}

Duff, who was initially frustrated in his missionary design, blew up the trumpet of alarm about the scepticism or atheism of a number of Hindu College students.\textsuperscript{157} A Writer observes that the Hindu Youth's notion of the Religion of Jesus was drawn chiefly from Thomas Paine's \textit{Age of Reason}, and the pages of Gibbon and Hume.\textsuperscript{158} In fact, Paine's \textit{Age of Reason} was very popular among a number of students. Duff found that it was a great obstacle in the path of converting the Hindus. He collected all the copies of it that were found in the market, piled them in the street and made a bonfire of them.\textsuperscript{159} But the craze for the book among the Hindu youths was great and it was sold at a much higher rate than the original price.\textsuperscript{160} Passages from it were often

\textsuperscript{154} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{155} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{156} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{157} Smith, George, \textit{Life Of Alexander Duff}, p. 89; Also Duff, Alexander, \textit{India And India Missions}, p. 608.
\textsuperscript{159} Swami Abhedananda, \textit{India And Her People}, p. 107.
\textsuperscript{160} \textit{The Calcutta Review}, February, 1962, p. 145.
translated in Bengali and inserted in the newspapers.\(^{161}\)

Someone took the trouble to translate it into Bengali and published it in the *Sungbad Proshakur*.\(^{161(a)}\) Many Hindus reprinted the book and distributed it among their fellow-countrymen.\(^{162}\)

The students or followers of Derozio appeared to be opposed to the Christian Missionaries for a time. Krishna Mohun Banerjea wrote in his autobiographical sketch: "The opposition they manifested to Christianity was nearly as decided as their antipathy to Hindooism. Several nights the subject of our sketch rambled in company with large bodies of friends in the principal streets in the town in order to throw the missionaries into ridicule, by feigning to preach the gospel, and imitating their pronunciation of Bengalee and their incorrect use of words and phrases in the language.\(^{163}\)

Some of Derozio's biographers or some writers, however, bring the charge of collaboration with the Christian Missionaries against Derozio. According to E.W. Madge, the moral lessons taught by Derozio made "the work of missionaries easy of accomplishment."\(^{164}\) But Derozio had, like Shelley,

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reverence for the person of Christ, although he never accepted the tenets of Christianity.\textsuperscript{165} Derozio was an admirer of the moral principles of Christianity.\textsuperscript{166} It was Christian morality as preached by Derozio that appealed most strongly to the hearts of Ramtanoo Lahiree and his fellow-pupils.\textsuperscript{167}

Thomas Edwards contended that the work of Duff, indeed, was but the complement of Derozio's.\textsuperscript{168} Again, that Duff only entered on the heritage of Derozio or that Krishna Mohun Banerjea, Mohesh Chunder Ghose and others of Derozio's pupils went over to Christianity was the only logical consequence of the teaching of their friend and master.\textsuperscript{169} But the same Edwards wrote that Derozio could neither subscribe to the unquestioning acceptance of the authority of the Romish Church in matter of faith, to the sacerdotalism of episcopal clergyman, to the fervid evangelicalism of Duff and his admirers or to the passionless, inhuman theology of Calvin. Truth like a torch (the more it shook it shines) was the moving spring that worked the mechanism of his intellect and life.\textsuperscript{170}

\textsuperscript{165} "Derozio, The Ango-India Poet", The Presidency College Magazine, Vol. XIII(Year ?), p. 108.
\textsuperscript{166} Ghose, Benoy, loc. cit., p. 125.
\textsuperscript{167} Shastri, Chhavnath, Ramtanu Lahiri-O-Tatkalin Bangasamaj (Bengali), p. 349.
\textsuperscript{168} Edwards, Thomas, Henry Derozio, The Eurasian Poet, Teacher And Journalist, p. 66.
\textsuperscript{169} Ibid, pp. 91 & 95.
\textsuperscript{170} Ibid, p. 169.
According to Peary Chand Mitra, the moral lessons taught by Derozio gradually produced practical effects. Krishna Mohun and Mohesh gradually acquired calmness, and finding a void in Derozio's teachings inasmuch as they did not open the vista into the life to come, began to examine the evidences of Christianity and at last embraced it. But the same Peary Chand remarked that he used to impress upon the pupils the sacred duty of thinking for themselves—to be in no way influenced by any of the idols mentioned by Bacon.

It is, therefore, not safe to rely on what may be called verbal or oral testimony of the above writers in bringing the charge of collaboration with the Christian Missionaries against Derozio.

Derozio was an idealist. Subjectivity was an important aspect of his teaching. He allowed ample freedom of expression, opinion and thought to his pupils. He did not define the limits of such individual liberty. But he believed that his students would approximate to the standard of truth and reason or to what might be called perfect-ability of mankind. When one of the students leaned towards either orthodoxy or Rammohun's Brahmaism and compromising tendency, or Duff's Christian teachings, one followed up

172. Mitra, Peary Chand, op. cit., p. 27.
one's judgement in disregarding the tenor of Derozio's teaching. whether Krishna Mohun or Mohesh or any of his pupils embraced Christianity or whether some of his pupils embraced Rammohun's Brahmaism or deism, formally or informally - all were unDerozian, and for all these Derozio could hardly be blamed.

The spirit of Greeco-Roman Renaissance, which favoured the revival of classical literatures, or the Protestant ideal of reformation is to be missed in Derozio's teaching. Born and bred up in western cultural tradition, Derozio could not be expected to effect a revival of Indian learning within a very brief span of life. One also could not expect so much maturity from a young Eurasian in reinterpreting Hindu religion in the light of the west and providing an alternative to traditional Hinduism. Derozio had also not profound knowledge of Hindu religion or of any other religion of India.

It would be far more consistent with the spirit of free thinking, rationalism, idealism and cosmopolitanism which Derozio sought to stir up had he equally conducted investigation into all religious traditions, Hindu, Muslim and Christian and even into the Company's tradition, or had Derozio made a comparative study of all religious traditions. But Derozio sought to stir up the spirit of rational enquiry into everything in the mind of his students and followers.
It is true that Derozio was to some extent inspired by the English romantic flavour of passionate protest against customs and conventions. But that need not justify the violence of feelings on the part of some of his pupils in unnecessarily running counter to the prejudices of their countrymen. Moreover, in Derozio there was not lawlessness and immorality that were usually associated with some of the English Romantic poets.

The chief essence of Derozio's teaching was that reason was the yardstick of judgement on any issue. It is necessary to examine to what extent Derozio's students and followers responded to his teaching.